

Written by Michael Shank  
Tuesday, 21 June 2011 00:00

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"We urge a significant and sizable reduction of U.S. military forces in Afghanistan beginning July 2011," the bipartisan group of Members of Congress wrote. "With Osama bin Laden killed and Al Qaeda largely driven from Afghanistan, it is time to accelerate the transfer of security responsibilities to the Government of Afghanistan and to reduce the U.S. military footprint there."

Complete text of the letter and current signatories are below.

"Congress must send a strong message that a token withdrawal is unacceptable," Congressman John Garamendi said. "Maintaining anywhere near 100,000 troops in Afghanistan, at a cost of \$10 billion per month, is an ineffective strategy for fighting terrorism and an unjustified drain on our budget. Our brave troops have largely succeeded in driving out Al Qaeda from Afghanistan. Our troops in Afghanistan continue to fight valiantly, but they are now on the wrong mission."

"Bringing home a limited number of troops will continue to prolong this war which is already the longest in America's history," said Congressman Walter Jones. "Bin Laden is gone, Al Qaeda is gone – it is time to declare victory and bring our brave men and women home."

"Almost three out of four Americans want to bring our troops home from Afghanistan, and we can no longer afford to spend over \$100 billion a year on this war that has no military solution. That why I believe a complete withdrawal from Afghanistan should begin immediately," said Representative Barbara Lee. "A modest reduction of 30,000 troops should not be considered significant since it would merely return us to 2009 and pre-escalation troop levels. A more 'significant' and reasonable goal would be the withdrawal of 50,000 combat troops by the end of this year which is only half of the roughly 100,000 troops currently on the ground."

"A token drawdown of a few thousand troops is not acceptable. The American people – and, increasingly, the Congress – are demanding more fundamental change in our policy," said Congressman Jim McGovern. "We will continue to make the point that instead of nation-building in Afghanistan, we need to do some more nation-building right here at home."

The Letter to the President:

Dear Mr. President,

We urge a significant and sizable reduction of U.S. military forces in Afghanistan beginning July 2011. With Osama bin Laden killed and Al Qaeda largely driven from Afghanistan, it is time to accelerate the transfer of security responsibilities to the Government of Afghanistan and to reduce the U.S. military footprint there.

In the wake of the horrific September 11th attacks, the U.S. resolved to eliminate terrorist training camps in Afghanistan and to bring those who would harm innocent civilians to justice.

## Bipartisan Coalition in Congress Sends Letter to President Obama Urging Significant and Sizable Withdrawal

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Our troops have fought bravely, and now fewer than 100 Al Qaeda operatives are estimated to remain in Afghanistan. The recent killing of Osama bin Laden, for which you and members of our military and intelligence communities should be commended, is the capstone of that initial mission.

International terrorist networks remain a grave threat to the United States, as Al Qaeda affiliates now have a significant presence in countries like Yemen, Somalia, and Pakistan. But maintaining anywhere near 100,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan is not an effective means of combating a global and decentralized enemy.

Our economic vitality is a crucial component of our national security. The nearly decade-long war in Afghanistan drains our resources, even as we face serious economic challenges at home. To date, we have spent nearly half a trillion dollars on the Afghan war, and that price tag increases by \$10 billion every month we remain. When we calculate the long-term costs of this war, including servicing our debt and caring for our veterans, the dollar figures are almost inconceivable. These funds are needed for rebuilding our own economy, reducing the deficit and generating jobs for Americans.

Ultimately, this war will end not on the battlefield but through political negotiations. As we scale down our military operations in Afghanistan we need to continue our diplomatic efforts, pushing for a negotiated settlement that includes the Government of Afghanistan and other parties interested in establishing peace and stability.

The American public is weary of a war with no end in sight, and we call upon you to bring the longest war in our nation's history to a close. Beginning in July of this year, we urge a swift, significant and sizable drawdown of U.S. troops from Afghanistan.

Sincerely,

John Garamendi (D-CA)  
Justin Amash (R-MI)  
Barbara Lee (D-CA)  
Walter Jones (R-NC)  
James P. McGovern (D-MA)  
Timothy Johnson (R-IL)  
Peter Welch (D-VT)  
Ron Paul (R-TX)  
George Miller (D-CA)  
John Duncan (R-TN)  
Louise Slaughter (D-NY)  
Tim Bishop  
Earl Blumenauer  
Bruce Braley  
Michael Capuano  
Judy Chu  
David Cicilline

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Hansen Clarke  
Yvette Clarke  
Steve Cohen  
John Conyers  
Jerry Costello  
Peter DeFazio  
Rosa DeLauro  
Keith Ellison  
Sam Farr  
Bob Filner  
Barney Frank  
Marcia Fudge  
Raul Grijalva  
Luis Gutiérrez  
Maurice Hinchey  
Mazie Hirono  
Mike Honda  
Jesse Jackson, Jr.  
Dennis Kucinich  
Dave Loebsack  
Ben Lujan  
Carolyn Maloney  
Mike Michaud  
Jim Moran  
Chris Murphy  
Jerrold Nadler  
John Olver  
Donald Payne  
Chellie Pingree  
Jared Polis  
Charlie Rangel  
Laura Richardson  
Kurt Schrader  
José Serrano  
Albio Sires  
Pete Stark  
Edolphus Towns  
Niki Tsongas  
Lynn Woolsey  
John Yarmuth

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